

Message Text

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ACTION ORM-02

INFO OCT-01 EA-07 IO-11 ISO-00 DHA-02 SCA-01 VO-03 INSE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8486

INFO USMISSION GENEVA

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE BANGKOK 3409

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SREF

SUBJ: INDOCHINESE REFUGEES ABOARD BOAT AT SAMMUT, THAILAND

REF: BANGKOK 1471

1. AS REPORTED REFTEL, 26 REFUGEES ARRIVED IN SAMMUT SONGRIN ON 28 OCT 75 FROM VUNGTAU, VN. THE REFUGEES, MOSTLY VIETNAMESE FISHERMEN, HAVE BEEN SITTING ABOARD THE VESSEL SINCE ARRIVAL IN THAILAND. THE THAI GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN PROVIDING MINIMAL FEEDING ASSISTANCE AND SANITARY CONDITIONS OVER THE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS HAVE DETERIORATED TO A VERY SQUALID STATE AS REPORTED BY THE UNHCR AND RED CROSS REPRESENTATIVES PERSONALLY FAMILIAR WITH THE CASE.

2. IN VIEW OF THE FACT THAT MOST OF THE BOAT PASSENGERS ARE ILLITERATE FISHERMEN, THEY DO NOT APPEAR TO QUALIFY FOR RESETTLEMENT IN ANY THIRD COUNTRY OPERATING REFUGEE PROGRAMS IN THAILAND, INCLUDING THE US. THE THAI GOVERNEMENT IS AWARE OF THIS FACT AND APPEARS TO BE ON THE VERGE OF REFUELING AND PROVISIONING THE BOAT AND SENDING IT BACK OUT TO SEA.

3. THE LOCAL UNHCR OFFICE IS OF THE OPINION THAT THIS FORCED DEPORTATION IS ABOUT TO BECOME A REALITY,
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EVEN THOUGH THE LOCAL UNHCR REPRESENTATIVE HAS MADE

A STRONG EFFORT TO PERSUADE THE THAI GOVERNMENT TO PERMIT THE REFUGEES TO STAY IN THAILAND ON HUMANITARIAN GROUNDS.

4. IN VIEW OF THE APPARENT IMMEDIACY OF THIS SITUATION, EMBASSY RECOMMENDS THAT THE DEPARTMENT AND US MISSION GENEVA CONTACT UNHCR AT HIGHEST LEVELS TO APPRISE THAT ORGANIZATION OF THIS CASE AND TO SUGGEST THAT UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES APPROACH THIRD COUNTRIES TO INVESTIGATE POSSIBILITY OF RESETTLEMENT IN ONE OF THESE COUNTRIES ON URGENT HUMANITARIAN GROUNDS. IT SHOULD BE POSSIBLE FOR UNHCR TO INTEREST SOME THIRD COUNTRIES IN CASES OF REFUGEES ABOUT TO BE DEPORTED FROM THAILAND. ADVANCE COMMITMENTS BY OTHER COUNTRIES TO CONSIDER SUCH CASES WILL GIVE UNHCR/ BANGKOK MORE OPTIONS THAN SIMPLY CONTACTING US AND THE FRENCH EMBASSY HERE FOR RESETTLEMENT WHICH IS PRESENT UNHCR APPROACH.
WHITEHOUSE

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